



Hamilton

MINUTES
IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, January 12, 2012 - 6:30 pm
City Hall, 71 Main St. W., Room 192

Present: Aspy Ayrton, Dena Honig, Thayra Marting, Arvind Sahay, David Hosten, Shuja Qureshi, Paul Hoang, Maher Hamade, Abdulkhaliq Herati, Dustin Rouse, Joana Fejjaj.

Also Present: Maxine Carter, May-Marie Duwai-Sowa, Jaffar Hayat - Access & Equity Division, and Jennie Vengris, Housing Division, City of Hamilton.

Regrets: Mohamed Hamouda, Hana Pinthus Rotchild.

Absent: Isaac Acquah, Minh Trinh, Zafar Siddiqui, Sumaira Khurshid Nasir Sarwar.

Guests:

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST.
None declared.

2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS.
All were welcomed and introduced themselves

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA.
3.1 Item 6- Presentation on Housing & Homelessness Action Plan
3.2 Item 10- Leave of absence
 3.2.1 Hanna Pinthus
 3.2.2 Nasir Sarwar

A. Ayrton/S. Qureshi
To accept the agenda as amended.

CARRIED.

4. Approval of minutes of December 8, 2011.

D. Rouse/T. Marting
To approve the minutes of December 8, 2011, as presented.

CARRIED.

5. Matters Arising from the Minutes

6. Presentation

6.1 Housing & Homelessness Action Plan

J. Vengris from Housing and Homelessness Division, City of Hamilton, delivered a presentation regarding the Hamilton Housing & Homelessness Action Plan.

The Housing & Homelessness Action Plan is a 10 years plan, for which City is responsible for planning and coordinating the range of services that deal with homelessness and affordable housing in our community.

She also mentioned that certain groups face more discrimination including the new comers in Hamilton. The proposed Action Plan will address barriers such as poor quality housing, lack of access and information. Therefore, Housing and Homelessness Division has planned to organise 20 focus group discussions either based on issue or a certain population group.

The seven important issues being highlighted in the action plan are;

- Not enough Housing
- Limited Choice
- Suitability
- Sustainability
- Stigma and discrimination
- Quality
- Income and Affordability

She also informed the committee that once this 10 year Action Plan is complete It will identify:

- The short, medium and long-term priorities to address the housing issues for households with lower income;
- Community outcomes and set targets;
- Assign and monitor specific actions;
- Ongoing successes, challenges and opportunities to share with community partners; and
- The full range of housing issues from homelessness to affordable home ownership.

Question: Will this plan cover the affordability vs choice of neighbourhood.

Answer: One of the key issues addressed under this plan is availability of affordable housing.

Question: What is the definition of Homelessness?

Answer: Anyone who is living without a shelter of his/her own.

Question: What is the current criterion for housing?

Answer: The current criteria for housing follow a certain threshold of income.

Question: What are the current priority areas for social housing?

Answer: Currently priority is given to vulnerable, victim of abuse, terminally sick persons, homeless youth, and new comers (one year/less).

Question: Why refugees are out of this list?

Answer: Since they are provided a support by CIC for the first year, after which they can apply for Social Housing.

Question: How other Cities are coping with this issue?

Answer: City of Calgary has successfully developed and implemented its Action Plan, and we will also compare with other cities like Ottawa.

Question: How the deficit in funding is affecting housing issue?

Answer: There is no National policy, we assume that the new national strategy will be developed so that we can look into opportunities and resources as well as looking into roles and regulations.

It was also suggested that Hamilton Chamber can come forward with some initiatives toward Affordable Housing flagship.

Question: There is a fair need of housing for parents (seniors) of immigrants, how would that be addressed and is there any special provision?

Answer: Housing Hamilton has a number of units designated to the seniors, although we know that there are certain barriers and isolation due to language, and there is also a dearth of any immigrant analysis and/ or information at this point.

Question: How many immigrant & refugees are in shelters?

Answer: No accurate information.

Question: Is priority given to the waiting list, and why some people are in the waiting list year after year.

Answer: The demand is huge as compared to the availability therefore people who do fall in the criteria mentioned above are accommodated first.

Question: How to make a complaint on Housing related issues because many people have issues due to language barrier and feel discriminated?

Answer: It is recommended to put complaints in writing, so that they can be tracked.

Question: How to handle complaints with tenants effectively?

Answer: The complaints against tenants are referred to Landlord and Tenant Board and are dealt with under the Ontario Residential Tenancies Act, 2006.
Comment: The present act is landlord centred and, it needs to be made more aligned with the needs of landlords as well.

Question: How can we enforce agreements with owners of roaming homes to improve the living conditions?

The Housing division is engaging owners of roaming homes and are enforcing the bye laws on the delinquent properties.

Question: How can we resolve issues of new comers when they want to apply for housing?

Answer: The Housing division has already noticed that the new comers find it difficult to find a co-signer for rental property and is working on this issue.

Question: Are there any incentives for the housing owners?

Answer: Small grants programs are available for the renovation of basements and also making the properties in compliance with the building codes.

Question: How is the Housing division addressing pest problems?

Housing division use the Air Quality Index to assess the cleanliness of the premises.

D. Hosten thanked J. Vengris for her presentation on the Housing & Homelessness Action Plan.

D. Honig/ M. Hamade

To accept the Housing Action Plan presentation.

CARRIED

Committee members were also invited to participate in the "Housing Community Event" on March 7, 2012 from 3:00 to 7:00 pm.

7. Business Items.

7.1 Work Plan & Priorities.

Tabled to the next meeting.

7.1.1 Discussion and review of work plan including Priority #3 Employment - Discussion.

Tabled to the next meeting.

7.1.2 Establishment of Work Group

Tabled to the next meeting.

8. Review and comment on reports, legislation, studies.

None

9. Correspondence/Current affairs.

9.1 Settlement Services Information- Invitation to CIC

M. Carter informed members that there is already a presentation scheduled on the Work Force Census in the February meeting of Immigrant & Refugee Advisory Committee, therefore she requested to move the Canadian Immigration & Citizenship presentation to the March meeting of committee. Later on, the committee unanimously agreed to schedule CIC presentation in the March meeting of I & RC.

9.2 Correspondence from Muhammd Shabbir, Housing Help Centre
M. Shabbir, Community Developer from Housing Help Centre (HHC)
requested to deliver a presentation to Immigrant and Refugee Advisory
Committee to increase the awareness regarding HHC.

M. Hamade /A. Ayrton

To invite Mohammd Shabbir in the March 08, 2012 meeting of I & RC.

CARRIED

10. New Business.

10.1 Leave of absence

Committee granted four months leave of absence to Hanna Pinthus and
Nasir Sarwar.

A. Ayrton /D. Rouse

To accept 4 months leave of absence for Hanna Pinthus and Nasir
Sarwar.

CARRIED

11. Next Meeting Date.

The next meeting will be held on February 08, 2011.

12. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.